

to marry all the rest of the world by punk_rock_yuppie

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Summary:

Richie Tozier, accidental matchmaker, comes to Hawkins, Indiana.

to marry all the rest of the world

Author's Note:

this is an idea that struck me at abt 9pm last night, and i couldn't sleep till i finished it. just some random fluff, featuring all my OTPs because i'm self-indulgent like that. big thanks to hannah (cathect) for reading it thru!! side note that if it wasn't clear, this takes place abt 2 years after the end of stranger things season 2! (just pretend richie is the same age as the rest of the kids, lmao)

enjoy!

He comes in like a gust of summer wind: hot, a little stifling, mostly unpleasant but not entirely so. That's what Mike thinks, at least. No one else seems to share his opinion but it doesn't matter; Mike knows from the moment Richie Tozier skids into first period late, one blistery morning in mid-September, that he's *nothing* but trouble. It's all just a matter of time, he figures, before everyone else catches on.

No one catches on.

Well, Nancy tells him there's nothing to catch on to in the first place. Nancy tells him that Richie is just a goofball kid, sweet and stupid, and he's just being himself in a new, unfamiliar town. Nancy tells him, "*you just don't like him because he looks like you.*" That's when Mike ends the conversation, because that's *so* not true, and Nancy's laughter follows him down to the basement.

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It starts with Joyce and Hopper.

They've been dancing around each other ever since that night—no

one can bring themselves to call it anything else. Just the night, not even capital letters or a funny codename. The night when Will almost died, the night when Bob *did* die, the night when El closed the gate. The night when Hawkins, temporarily, returned to normal.

Since *that* night, Joyce and Hopper have been teetering on an edge together. Everyone can see it, but there's also an unspoken mutual agreement that it's not really their business to meddle in.

Will banned the Party from trying ("it's not that I don't want Chief Hopper to date mom, it's just... it'd be *weird*.") and the only one who didn't listen was El. Even so, her attempt was short-lived and quelled from a blushing, embarrassed outrage from Hopper. Jonathan gave it a shot at one point, but he later admits he took advice from Steve and it's clear that plan was doomed from the start. After that, the agreement is set and everyone—including Joyce and Hopper themselves—stop trying

At least, until Richie Tozier breezes into town.

It's dinner at the Byers household, because it's a Friday and Lucas is out of town with his family and Dustin promised his mom he'd stay home and El brought Max along, and Mike really didn't want to stay home. So, he's at the Byers residence for dry meatloaf and lumpy mashed potatoes and things are... tense. Mainly because Mike showed up not knowing that Max would be there, but that *Richie* would be there, too.

(Will tells him just after he arrives that Richie mentioned needing to get out of the house for a bit, and Will just *offered*, it just happened, it's not a big deal right?)

Jonathan isn't around but they still have to dig an extra chair out of the shed since Max and El take up one side of the table. Joyce sits at one end, Hopper at the other, and Mike sits beside Hopper, with Will to his right, and Richie on Will's other side. It's a bit of a tight fit but it works, mostly.

"So," Richie starts after an especially impressive bite. "How long have you two been together?" He asks and or a split second, Mike thinks he's talking about El and Max. Mike is ready to snap at him, but then

he realizes Richie's fork is bouncing between Joyce and Hopper. Both of whom look stricken.

"Kid," Hopper starts, gruff. "We're not—?"

"It's not like that," Joyce assures in her gently shaking voice.

Richie snorts into his potatoes, and it wrings a laugh out of Will. "Sorry," Richie says without sounding very sorry. "You two just seem like it. And, honestly, life is too fucking short to waste time and miss out on shit, you know?" Richie shrugs and spears another bite of meatloaf onto his fork. "You two seem like you'd be good together," he adds.

Mike wants to snark back, *you barely even know them*, but before he can Hopper is making a curious noise beside him. All together, the kids at the table swivel their heads to look at Hopper, then at Joyce, then back to Hopper. (Save for Richie who seems deeply enamored with the food.)

Joyce grins, she's *blushing*, and Hopper looks pleased but embarrassed. They haven't said a word to each other, but the air is charged with something and Richie looks way too fucking smug.

Later that night, when Hopper is taking El and Max back to their place for a sleepover, Joyce says goodbye to Hop on the porch. Richie leers at the mostly closed door like he wants to eavesdrop, but goes along to Will's room when Will tugs at his sleeve.

"Just wanted to see my handiwork in action." Richie explains as he falls into a beanbag chair in the corner of Will's room. He beams. "It's a gift, you know. Don't know how it works, but I got a *knack* for that shit."

Will is grinning and pink in the cheeks and Mike almost, *almost* makes an excuse about needing to leave. He doesn't, not in the end. He sets up his usual sleeping bag beside Will's bed, and tries not to feel annoyed when Will digs a spare out of Jonathan's room for Richie. Will falls asleep first, like always, but only after the latest Clash tape is popped in the player. Richie hums along, off-key, and dozes off not long after. Mike sleeps, eventually, and dreams of Will's

smile and Richie's smirk.

Next is even weirder.

Next is Nancy and Jonathan—and *Steve*.

Will's invited Richie over for a campaign night (*he doesn't want to play, Mike, he just wants to hang out with someone*) and Nancy, Jonathan, and Steve are puttering around the house. Mike's parents are at the local elementary school watching Holly's talent show, meaning the music blaring from the basement is loud and way too much pizza has already been ordered.

"I'm gonna grab a soda, anyone want anything?" Richie asks as he stands. He practically falls off the little futon couch against one wall, but ends up on his feet somehow. He brushes the wrinkles from his close and looks around expectantly.

"I'll take a Coke," El and Will say together before shooting each other a grin. Mike's chest flutters at the sight, and leans over to steal a kiss from El once the moment passes.

"Root beer for me," Lucas chimes in. Everyone else passes, and Richie salutes before taking the basement stairs two at a time. They settle back into their campaign as they wait, and it isn't until the Party hits the dungeon that Will speaks up.

"He's been gone a while." He looks toward the stairs.

"It's just my house, dude," Mike insists. "He's probably..." He trails off, unable to come up with even a joke, let alone a *real* reason Richie might be taking so long. All eyes fall to him, though, and when no one else makes a move Mike groans. "Fine, I'll go find him." He stands up and the bubble around the table bursts. No longer are they in 'D&D Mode.' Now, they're just a bunch of kids hanging out.

Mike takes the stairs one at a time and peeks out into the hallway cautiously. When he strains his ears, he can faintly hear quiet voices from the living room, so he follows that trail. He's not prepared for

the sight that greets him, tame though it may be.

Nancy, Jonathan, and Steve are huddled together on the couch. Their eyes are all a little red around the rims and Steve is sniffing, but smiling. Jonathan's ears are pink like when Mike catches him sneaking out of Nancy's room late at night. Nancy is the most put-together of them all, but her blush makes the Wheeler Family Freckles especially apparent on her skin. Richie is sitting gingerly on the coffee table across from them, looking somehow exhausted but just as smug as he was a few weeks prior.

"See?" He's saying with a broad gesture to the three of them. "I mean, sure, people are gonna think it's weird. But who gives a fuck, right?"

Steve is the only one to laugh, though Nancy and Jonathan smile. "Right," Steve agrees. Mike notices then that Steve's fingers are tangled with Jonathan's, and Nancy is holding his other hand. They're pressed tight, shoulder to shoulder, and if they were any closer they would be tangled.

Richie claps his hands. "Great, awesome. Look, I gotta get some sodas downstairs, so..." He lets the word hang until Nancy rolls her eyes and nods. She waves him off and Richie tips an imaginary hat before hurrying toward the kitchen again.

Mike reacts too late to do anything other than watch Richie come at him; Richie sees him right away and grins. He jerks a thumb over his shoulder as if to say, *see?* Mike scowls and turns on his heel. He doesn't help Richie carry the sodas down, even though it earns him some odd looks from their friends. They fall back into the campaign for another couple hours until his parents show up.

When Mike goes upstairs to see everyone off, he begrudgingly admits—to himself, silently—that Nancy looks happier than he's seen her in ages.

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The third time is weirder, still.

Although, Mike is coming to understand that's just how Richie Tozier operates. Weird, weirder, weirdest, and so on and so forth.

Mike isn't even sure what the conversation looked like, and definitely doesn't want to know. All he *does* know is that one day at lunch, Dustin sits beside Lucas and shyly kisses him on one cheek and Max kisses Lucas on his other cheek. They sit through lunch like that, the three of them blushing bright as beacons, and Mike doesn't need to look to know their hands are clasped under the table. On Will's other side, Richie preens.

It keeps happening, though Mike sees it less and less (primarily because he doesn't hang out with Richie nearly often as Will does). Mostly, Mike hears it through the grapevine, so to speak.

He hears about Ms. Clearwater and Mr. Smith from the barbershop downtown, how they've always made googly-eyes at each other but never did anything about it until Richie Tozier stopped by for a quick trim. Or how Keith manages to find himself a girlfriend, all because Richie smoked a couple rounds of Rampage one weekend.

It's all Mike hears, really. It's the talk of the town. Resident new kid and matchmaker, Richie Tozier, at your service.

Mike maintains that it's just silly and annoying right up until he needs Richie's help.

Then it's still silly and annoying, Mike just doesn't say so.

They're sitting in Mike's basement, and Richie's got his fingers steepled together and looks far too please.

"Make me an offer I can't refuse," he says in a terrible Italian accent.

Mike rolls his eyes.

“Okay, okay,” Richie shrugs. “Worth a shot. Anyway, Jane wants you to be more romantic.” Richie always calls her Jane, mainly because that’s what she goes by in school. And really, they could all do with getting used to calling her that—it’s been two years, almost three—but Mike just can’t. The only other people who call her Jane are Mike’s parents and El’s aunt Becky. Mike doesn’t comment on it though, mostly because he’s more preoccupied with—

“How did you *know* ?”

“Mike, Mike, Mike,” Richie chides airily. “I know everything!” A beat passes and Mike sincerely wishes he could wipe the shit-eating grin off Richie’s face. “Nah, Max mentioned it to me, said that Jane told her.” Richie props his chin in his hand and stares at Mike. “Need date ideas? I’ve got flashcards.”

Mike scowls and Richie holds up his hands in surrender instead.

“Hey, don’t shoot the messenger!” Richie sinks back into a relaxed pose: leaning back in the seat with his arms behind his head. “You have a car, dude. Take her out closer to the city. She’s gotta be sick of the Hawk. *I’m* sick of the Hawk.”

Mike’s scowl fades and he nods. “Yeah, okay.” He looks down and fiddles with the sleeve of his sweatshirt. “Anything else that, uh, Max mentioned?”

Richie grins and for once, it doesn’t make Mike’s blood pressure spike. It’s a soft and easy grin, kind and not at really teasing. “Nope. Just take her out more, treat her special. Cuz damn, if any girl I’ve ever met is special, it’s Jane, you know?”

Mike finally softens, and he grins back at Richie—an expression that clearly gobsmacks the other, something Mike delights in—and nods. “I know,” he agrees.

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“Wait, wait, wait,” Lucas practically shouts. “Mr. Casanova here has *never dated anyone* ?”

Mike is glad they’re in the basement; this isn’t a conversation he’d

want to be having at lunch. Lucas can't reign his voice in and Dustin's egging him on and Richie is blushing and quiet. The quiet is what's most disconcerting, even Mike can admit that.

Richie aims for an easy shrug and misses by a mile. He smacks on hand against the table and the other against Will's shoulder. "What can I say? Just not lucky in love, I guess." He grins, awkwardly.

"You're the luckiest person when it comes to love," El tells him, soft and serious in her tone. Mike loves her a little more for the genuine concern in her voice, though he's a little wary of the plan coming together in her eyes. Not that he's going to stop her; no, he's sure he'll end up roped into the plan as well. He always does.

"No, no, I know." Richie waves off El's words. "It's just, for me." He gestures to himself, to his heart. "Just not lucky, I guess."

"Maybe you're too picky." Max suggests absently, without looking up from her latest skateboarding magazine.

"Maybe," Lucas drawls, "you're just really blind."

Richie flicks at the edge of his cokebottle glasses. "Gee, you think?"

Lucas rolls his eyes. "Maybe you're just doomed to be single forever," he amends in a lighter tone.

Richie shrugs good-naturedly but before he can reply, Will speaks up.

"Maybe not," he says, reaching beside him to link fingers with Richie. The table falls silent (and Mike watches the glint leave El's gaze, though she looks just as pleased) and all eyes fall to the pair of hands on the table. Richie squeezes Will's hand once, then brushes his thumb over Will's knuckles.

"Look at this," Richie says faintly. "Mr. Casanova strikes again. Ten for ten!" He raises his hand for a high-five and without thinking, Mike reaches up and drags his hand back down. Mike ignores Richie's pout, especially when Will cures the frown with a kiss on the cheek. "I still got it." Richie declares confidently.

He smiles at Will, then. And finally, *finally*, Mike thinks he

understands why everyone likes Richie so much. Doesn't mean he's not still annoying and doesn't mean Mike won't jump on every possible chance to tease him relentlessly, but.

Well, Mike thinks he's catching on.